

CLASS OF 1820

JOHN BLATCHFORD

The Reverend John Blatchford, D. D., was born at Newfield, now Bridgeport, Conn., May 24, 1799. His father removed to Lansingburgh, N. Y., in 1804. Here, in 1816, he united with the church, and his attention was soon turned to the ministry. His preparatory studies were first at Cambridge Academy, and afterwards at Salem, N. Y. He entered Union College in 1817, and graduated there in 1820. His theological studies were pursued at the seminary at Princeton, N. J. He was licensed to preach, by the Presbytery of Troy, in 1823. He was first settled at Pittstown, N. Y., and was ordained and installed there in August, 1823. The Rev. Dr. John B. Romeyn, of New York, preached the sermon on the occasion, and the Rev. Mr. Beman made the ordaining prayer. His father gave the charge to the pastor, and the Rev. Ravaud K. Rodgers gave the charge to the people. He remained at Pittstown till the Spring of 1825, when he received and accepted a call to the Congregational Church in his native place, where he labored with much acceptance till 1836 when, on account of his wife's health, he removed west, spending the winter of 1836-37 in Jacksonville, Ill. In 1837, he was called to Chicago, where he continued till 1840. From 1841-1844 he was connected with Marion College, in Missouri, first as Professor, and afterwards as President. His health becoming impaired, he removed to Quincy, Ill., which place was his ~~last~~ residence at the time of his death. He died in St. Louis, at the residence of his son-in-law, Morris Collins, Esq., April 8, 1855.

The Blatchford Memorial  
New York  
1871.

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CLASS OF 1820

JOHN BLATCHFORD

Son of the Rev. Samuel Blatchford, D. D., former pastor of this church (First Congregational Church of Bridgeport, Conn.) was born May 24, 1799, in Stratfield. Was graduated at Union College in 1820. Studied theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, and was ordained pastor of the Presbyterian church at Pittstown, N. Y., in August, 1823. He was installed pastor of the Presbyterian church in Stillwater, in April, 1825, and on February 10, 1830, he was installed here. After being dismissed as above, he removed to the West, resided successively at Jacksonville and Chicago, Ill., and at Wheeling, Va. From 1841 to 1844 he was connected with Marion College, the later period as president. He removed thence to West Ely, Mo., and thence to Quincy, Ill., where he died in April, 1855.

He received the degree of D. D., from Marion College in 1841.

He possessed a bright, ready mind, a genial spirit and pleasing manners. His general appearance was attractive and he was almost anywhere as acceptable minister. A very interesting revival occurred under his labors here in Bridgeport in 1831, which added 86 to the church membership, and the church parted with him reluctantly.

He was the son of Samuel and Alicia (Windeatt) Blatchford. His father came to America in 1795.

History of Bridgeport, Conn. p. 173  
Samuel Orcutt  
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CLASS OF 1820

JOHN BLATCHFORD

Was born at Newfield (now Bridgeport), Conn., May 24, 1799; removed in childhood to Lansingburg, N. Y., and was educated at Cambridge Academy and Union College in that State, graduating in 1820. He finished his theological course at Princeton, N. J., in 1823, after which he ministered successively to Presbyterian churches at Pittstown and Stillwater, N. Y., in 1830 accepting the pastorate of the First Congregational Church of Bridgeport, Conn. In 1836 he came to the West, spending the following winter at Jacksonville, Ill., and, in 1837, was installed the first pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, where he remained until compelled by failing health to resign and return to the East. In 1841 he accepted the chair of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy at Marion College, Mo., subsequently assuming the Presidency. The institution having been purchased by the Free Masons, in 1844, he removed to West Ely, Mo., and thence, in 1847, to Quincy, Ill., where he resided during the remainder of his life. His death occurred in St. Louis, April 8, 1855. The churches he served testified strongly to Dr. Blatchford's faithful, acceptable and successful performance of his ministerial duties. He was married in 1825 to Frances Wickes, daughter of Eliphalet Wickes, Esq., of Jamaica, Long Island, N. Y.

Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois 51  
Bateman & Selby  
Munsell Pub. Co.  
1900.



CLASS OF 1820

JOHN BLATCHFORD.

Rev. John Blatchford was installed pastor of the Presbyterian Church, July, 1837. During the pastorate of Mr. Blatchford, the church-building was removed to south of Washington Street. The conditions or tenure by which the Church held the various parcels of real estate which it occupied for ~~some~~ time to time, we are not advised of, and so that part of the church's history as well as numerous other items and statistics, are left for others to recite. Mr. Blatchford remained something over two years, and resigned in August, 1839.

The Rev. John Blatchford was born at Newfield, now Bridgeport, Conn., May 24, 1799. He was the tenth child of a family of eleven sons and six daughters. His parents were Samuel (son of Henry and Mary Heath Blatchford) and Alicia (Windeatt) Blatchford. Rev. Samuel Blatchford, who had been educated at the Dissenting College, at Homerton, near London, and some eight years a preacher in England, sailed for America in June, 1795, and arrived in August, the same year. We may merely say that Dr. Samuel Blatchford (for that degree was conferred upon him by Williams College, in 1808) was long (24 years) a pastor at Lansingburgh, N. Y., where he died, March 17, 1828.

Rev. John Blatchford was a graduate of Union College, in 1820, and his theological studies were pursued at Princeton, N. J. He was licensed to preach in 1823, and he settled at Pittstown, N. Y., in that year. In 1825, he accepted a call to Stillwater, N. Y., where he continued until 1836, when he removed West, and spent the winter in Jacksonville, Ill. In 1837, he was called to the First Presbyterian Church in Chicago, where he was installed pastor in July of that year, and continued until August, 1839. From 1841 to 1844, he was connected with Marion College, Mo., first a Professor and afterward as President. Impaired health, however, occasioned the removal of Dr. Blatchford to Quincy, Ill., and where he continued afterward to reside. His death occurred while on a visit to St. Louis, Mo., at the home of his son-in-law, Mr. Morris Collins.

Chicago Antiquities            p. 618  
Henry H. Hurlburt  
Chicago, Ill.  
1881.



CLASS OF 1820

JOHN BLATCHFORD

Died: At St. Louis, on Sunday, April 8, at the residence of his son-in-law, Morris Collins, the Rev. John Blatchford, D. D., of Quincy, Ill. in the 56th year of his age.

1855

Prof. Pearson's Scrap Book      p. 407



X  
lege, Schenectady, in 1806, became a member of the Freshman class in College in 1807, and graduated in 1811. He then went to New York, and commenced the study of Theology under the Rev. Dr. Milledoler; but when the Theological Seminary at Princeton was opened the next year, he entered it as a student, and remained there until he was licensed to preach by the New York Presbytery, on the 22d of April, 1815. On the 27th of November following, he was ordained and installed Pastor of the Orange Street Church, New York. After remaining there about three years, he accepted a call from the Branch (Presbyterian) Church in Salem, Mass., and was installed there by the Londonderry Presbytery, on the 6th of January, 1819. He resigned this charge about the close of 1820, spent the succeeding winter and spring in the city of New York, and then took a missionary tour in the Western part of the State of New York, and in Ohio. In the summer of 1822, he accepted an invitation from the united Congregations of Snow Hill, Pitt's Creek, Rehoboth, and Monokin in Maryland, and immediately commenced his labours there. But when he had scarcely had time to survey his anticipated field of labour, death put a period to both his labours and his life. In August of the same year, he was attacked with congestive fever, and on the 7th of September following, died at Princess Ann, whither he had gone a few days before,—in the thirty-fourth year of his age. It is inscribed on his monument—"All who knew him, loved him." In the autumn of 1816, he was married to Mary Ann, daughter of Elisha Coit, of New York. She is now (1856) the widow of the late Hon. Samuel Hubbard, of Boston.

*John*, a younger son of Dr. Blatchford, who also entered the ministry, was born at Bridgeport, Conn., May 24, 1796. Having removed with his father's family to Lansingburg, he was fitted for College, partly at the Cambridge Academy, Washington County, N. Y., and partly at the Salem Academy. He entered Union College in 1817, and graduated in 1820. X  
Shortly after, he became a member of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, where he remained between two and three years. After being licensed by the Presbytery of Troy, he accepted a call from the Presbyterian Church in Pittstown, N. Y., where he was ordained and installed in August, 1823. Here he remained till the spring of 1825, when he removed to Stillwater, N. Y.,—being installed Pastor of the Church there on the 20th of April of that year. In 1829, he accepted a call from the Congregational Church in his native place. Here he laboured with much acceptance till 1836, when the enfeebled health of his wife led him to resign his charge with a view to foreign travel. This purpose, however, was providentially defeated; and the winter following he spent at Jacksonville, Ill. In 1837, he was called to Chicago, where he continued labouring acceptably and usefully until 1840, when, in consequence of having suffered severely from a brain fever, from the effects of which he never fully recovered, he returned to the East with a view to a permanent residence. But, compelled by the health of his wife, he again went to the West. The winter of 1840-41 he spent at Wheeling, Va.; and from 1841 to 1844, he was connected with Marion College,—first as Professor of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy, and afterwards as President. After the College was purchased by the Freemasons, he removed to West Ely, where he continued till 1847; when, at the instance of friends, he removed to Quincy, Ill.; and there, after abounding in labours for several years, he died in April, 1855. He was a



man of a ready mind, a genial spirit, frank and pleasant manners, zealously devoted to his work, and a very acceptable preacher. He was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Marion College in 1841.

Mrs. Blatchford (the Doctor's widow) survived him many years, and died at Lansingburg, after an illness of about six days, on the 2d of December, 1846. She was a lady of high intellectual endowments, and a beautiful specimen of true refinement and Christian loveliness.

The following is a list of Dr. Blatchford's published works:—The Validity of Presbyterian Ordination maintained in a Letter to the Rev. William Smith, D. D., 1798. An Address delivered to the Oneida Indians, 1810. A Sermon before the Albany Bible Society, 1811. A Sermon on the day of the National Thanksgiving, 1815. A Sermon on the sanctification of the Sabbath, 1825.

I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Blatchford several times, and was always struck with his bland and gentlemanly manners, and his sensible and edifying conversation. I heard him preach once only: the sermon in matter and manner was highly impressive. I could easily understand, from what I saw of him, that he must have been one of the leading men of his day.

FROM THE REV. MARK TUCKER, D. D.

WETHERSFIELD, Conn., June 21, 1849.

My dear Sir: My recollections of the late Dr. Blatchford are altogether of a pleasant character. He is associated in my mind with the whole of my college course, with its hopes and aspirations, with its early struggles and closing scenes. He was one of the Trustees and one of the Examiners of Union College. He was exceedingly kind to young men, and took a deep interest in their welfare. As several of his sons were, at different times, members of College, he was accustomed to visit them in their rooms, and, indulging himself with a pipe and familiar conversation, intermingling interesting anecdotes with judicious counsel, his hold upon the affections of the young men whom he occasionally met there, became very strong. His open, manly countenance, and dignified English manners, made an early impression upon me. He was an excellent Greek scholar—his translation of Moor's Greek Grammar was adopted by the Faculty of Union College. He was always present at the Examinations and the Commencements of the College, and was regarded as one of its most efficient friends and patrons. I had no intimate acquaintance with him until after my settlement in the ministry at Stillwater, in 1817. I was allowed to become one of a small circle of ministers who met for mutual improvement, and soon was admitted to his confidence. That circle, though small, embraced men of the first talents in Albany and the vicinity. It was at their meetings that I first learned, from actual observation, the benignity and generosity of his spirit, his vigorous powers, and substantial acquirements.

Dr. Blatchford was eminently favoured in having a wife admirably fitted to her station. Their numerous children, both sons and daughters, have borne ample testimony, by their excellent characters and useful lives, to the wisdom and fidelity of their parents. One of the greatest American statesmen once said, "Our children rather than our parents tell what we are." It is seldom that such strong ties hold a family together.

As a preacher, Dr. Blatchford was distinguished for ease and naturalness; for appropriate and useful thought, and an impressive and somewhat imposing



Mary - will  
you please answer  
this and

C. HAMMOND BLATCHFORD  
508 MUNROE AVENUE  
NORTH TARRYTOWN, NEW YORK

March 3, 1957

ack. 3/1/57

Dear Doctor Davidson:

I am writing a biography of my great-grandfather, Rev. John Blatchford, D.D., a graduate of your institution in the Class of 1820. Will you kindly request a member of your staff to verify the degree--was it simply a "Baccalaureate"? How does one abbreviate that degree?

I would appreciate, if not too difficult, the verification of his membership, Phi Beta Kappa. And if the record shows any other honors or distinctions, kindly report them. His father, Rev. Samuel B., D.D., served on Union's committee of examiners, I believe, and he had at least two brothers, Henry and Richard Milford, who were Union graduates.

I would be interested if the Blatchford Scholarship or Fellowship (s) is still awarded. Could you tell me, again if not too troublesome, who was the donor of same, and in whose memory if it was a memorial.

I recall most pleasantly meeting you and Mrs. Davidson at Centenary one Sunday evening following an address you gave to the girls there. I hope everything continues to go well with you.

Sincerely yours,

C. Hammond Blatchford

Doctor Carter Davidson, President  
Union College  
Schenectady, New York

Recd  
Dr. D.  
best wishes



C. HAMMOND BLATCHFORD  
508 MUNROE AVENUE  
NORTH TARRYTOWN, NEW YORK

March 20, 1957

Dear Mr. Swanker:

I greatly appreciate your looking up the information I requested. Will you please pass this note along to Mrs. Van Loan as I wish to let her know that her research on the Blatchford Prizes will interest several members of the present generation of the family.

At present I have no family genealogies for your file, but will keep the thought in mind. When my little booklet is off the press, I shall send you a copy.

Very sincerely yours,

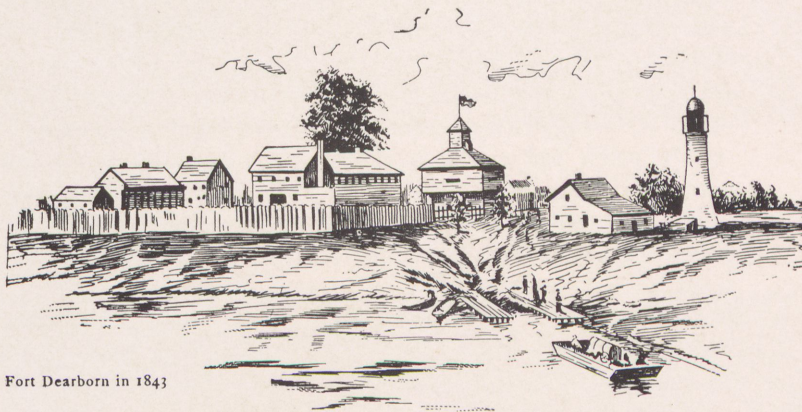
*C. Hammond Blatchford*

Mr. Henry J. Swanker  
Union College  
Schenectady, N.Y.



A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF  
The Reverend John Blatchford, D.D.

BASED MAINLY ON THE WRITINGS OF HIS SON  
ELIPHALET WICKES BLATCHFORD



Fort Dearborn in 1843

*A Stanza by His Favorite Hymn Writer*

Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

—ISAAC WATTS, 1719





## FOREWORD

*To the Descendants of John Blatchford  
and Frances Wickes:*

Like the companion sketch of Dr. Samuel Blatchford, this one of his son is purposely brief. If you wish to locate more information, turn to page 20 for source materials which are numbered to correspond with the references in the sketch. To become familiar with the lives and times of this fine couple, there is no substitute for reading the literature and visiting the places where they lived; however, we hope that this account will enable you to get somewhat acquainted with them.

The editor wishes to thank many persons for their assistance, especially his wife, Virginia Bliss Blatchford, his cousin, Barbara Blatchford Fowler, and her husband, Dr. Earle B. Fowler, who have secured information, visited sites, and in other ways been of great help. He alone is responsible for the selection of the quoted passages and some omissions therefrom as well as a few verbal alterations and changes in order.

It is a privilege to inscribe this sketch to the memory of a first cousin, John Blatchford (1888-1948), the namesake and great grandson of its subject. Stricken with total deafness after his freshman year at Amherst College, he continued as a member of the Class of 1910 and graduated in 1913 from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A devoted son, brother, husband, and father, he overcame his handicap in a manner which won the admiration of his many friends and relatives.

CHARLES HAMMOND BLATCHFORD, JR.

North Tarrytown, New York  
Easter, 1957



## CHRONOLOGY

THE REVEREND JOHN BLATCHFORD, D.D.

SON OF SAMUEL AND ALICIA WINDEATT BLATCHFORD

- 1799, May 24 Born at Newfield (now Bridgeport) Conn.  
 1820 A.B. degree, Union College, Schenectady, N. Y.  
 1820-1823 Studied at Princeton Theological Seminary  
 1823 Ordained at Pittstown (N. Y.) Presbyterian Church  
 and installed as pastor thereof  
 1825, May 1 Installed, Stillwater (N. Y.) Presbyterian Church  
 1825, May 18 Married Frances Wickes, at Jamaica, Long Island,  
 N. Y.  
 1830, Feb. 10 Began pastorate at First Congregational Church,  
 Bridgeport, Conn.  
 1836-1837 Lectured on Philosophy, Illinois College  
 1837, July 1 Installed, First Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Ill.  
 1839-1840 Preached during winter, Wheeling, Va.  
 1840-1843 Professor of Theology, Marion College, Mo. Award-  
 ed D.D. degree, 1841. President, 1841-1843.  
 1843-1855 Engaged in home missionary work and helped or-  
 ganize theological seminary which became Mc-  
 Cormick Theological Seminary of Chicago  
 1855, April 8 Died at St. Louis, Mo.

## CHILDREN

(see *Blatchford Memorial II*, page 70)

Eliphalet Wickes	b. May 31, 1826	d. Jan. 25, 1914
Richard Milford	Aug. 20, 1827	Feb. 20, 1832
Martha Wickes	June 17, 1829	May 19, 1862
John Samuel	Jan. 19, 1831	Aug. 29, 1912
Frances Alicia	Sept. 6, 1832	June 6, 1846
Eliza Allen	Sept. 22, 1834	June 11, 1835
Harriet Punnett	May 9, 1837	Aug. 7, 1838
Eliza Harriet	Nov. 21, 1838	Mar. 3, 1839
Alexander	Jan. 1, 1840	Oct. 9, 1847
Mary Cebra	Oct. 23, 1843	Dec. 27, 1849
Alice Windeatt	Dec. 20, 1847	Aug. 6, 1892
Nathaniel Hopkins	Sept. 25, 1849	June 13, 1927

## A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF

The Reverend John Blatchford, D.D.

### NEW LIFE AT THE TURN OF A CENTURY

Our Republic was very young in 1799, the year John Blatchford was born. John Adams, the second president, had been two years in office, and Philadelphia had succeeded New York as the new nation's capital. The recent invention of Whitney's cotton gin was changing the life of the South, while the Industrial Revolution was speeding up the tempo of life on both sides of the Atlantic. The rising Napoleon, beginning his conquest of Europe, ordered a stop to France's war-threatening raids against United States shipping.

With the new century dawning, Jefferson would soon buy the Louisiana empire from the French, Robert Fulton's *Clermont* would cut the time from New York to Albany to 32 hours, and DeWitt Clinton's dream of joining the Hudson with the Great Lakes would come true, all vital steps of the westward movement in which John Blatchford was later to play a part.

Enterprising Easterners crossed the Alleghenies to the inviting midlands so pregnant with opportunity. In primitive river craft and Conestoga wagons these intrepid pioneers pushed on. Hardships and hazards were commonplace. Disease and other dangers took their toll, such as the massacre by Indians at Chicago's Fort Dearborn at the start of the War of 1812. As the settlements increased, so did their need for schools and churches, and the seaboard states responded with teachers and pastors, John Blatchford among them.

In the five New England states the property damaged in the Revolution was largely repaired, and men were turning again to farming, industry, and trade. On the Connecticut shore of Long



Island Sound the large towns like New Haven and Stamford and the smaller ones such as Stratfield and Newfield, mainly dominated by shipping, were stirring with new life. In 1800 the 250 people living near the mouth of the Pequannock River incorporated themselves into the Borough of Bridgeport, the first borough in the state.<sup>8</sup>

Reverend Samuel Blatchford, young and progressive, was the pastor of Stratfield's Congregational Church. Attracted by America's freedom in government and religion, he had recently brought his family from England. He held brief pastorates at Bedford, N. Y., and Greenfield Hill, Conn., before coming to the Stratfield church. The new parsonage in nearby Newfield already held four sons and three daughters when John was born on May 24, 1799. No wonder that he soon organized an academy in order to supplement his annual salary of \$500. John was four years old when his father was invited to become pastor of the Presbyterian churches of Lansingburgh\* and Waterford, on the Hudson north of Troy, as well as principal of Lansingburgh Academy.<sup>3</sup>

We have few details of John's boyhood, but we know he had plenty of playmates—by the time he was twelve he had eleven brothers and sisters—and that there was swimming and fishing in summer, skating and sliding in winter. He suffered from asthma until 8 or 10 and was very thin until about 14. At 16 John joined his father's church and decided to be a minister.<sup>13</sup> Thanks to interested friends he was able to prepare for college at the academies in Cambridge and Salem, New York, towns in neighboring Washington County.

In 1817 he entered Union College at Schenectady where he joined a debating group called the Philomathean Society and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.<sup>5</sup> Upon graduating in 1820 he continued his studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. In view of his father's leadership in organizing new churches, it was natural for John to spend his seminary vacations in home missionary work. In 1823 he ended his Princeton studies of nearly three years and was licensed to preach by the Troy Presbytery.

\* Lansingburgh is now a part of the City of Troy. A stained glass window in the Presbyterian Church and a marble tablet in the entrance hall are memorials to Dr. Blatchford.

# 1823-30. PITTSTOWN—FRANCES WICKES—STILLWATER

CURRENT EVENTS: President Monroe's Doctrine, 1823;  
Erie Canal opened, 1825; American Home Missionary  
Society founded, 1826

It was appropriate that the young pastor was ordained that summer in the little Presbyterian Church at Pittstown which his father had organized four years before. The service of ordination was impressive, and the charge to the new minister was given by his father who was very happy to have a son, his second in the ministry, in a parish near his own. Pittstown was attractively located in the hills northeast of Lansingburgh on the winding road to Bennington, Vermont, the area which had seen not long before the heroic action of Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys. For the next two years, until the spring of 1825, John served his rural congregation.

The month of May was doubly important for the young minister. On the first he became pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Stillwater, New York. On the 18th he married the attractive Frances Wickes,<sup>15</sup> daughter of Eliphalet Wickes, a highly respected and successful lawyer of Jamaica, Long Island.<sup>9</sup> As Frances' mother, Martha Herriman Wickes, had died just a year before, it was a simple wedding attended only by the immediate families and conducted by John's father. Frances met John through her aunt, Harriet Wickes, who had married in 1819 his older brother, Thomas Windeatt Blatchford, a young physician starting practice in Jamaica. Frances wrote that "after a few days' excursion we returned to take our departure for the new home, full of youthful anticipations. I was prepared to enjoy all that was in reserve for me . . . but my experience could not anticipate the devotion and tender love of my husband."<sup>7</sup>

Stillwater was a farming village on the west bank of the Hudson just south of the Saratoga battlefield, its name well describing its location on the quiet stretch of the river south of Schuylerville. The young couple's first child, named for the bride's father, was born the next May in the parsonage by the river. Three quarters of a century later Eliphalet began his memoirs as follows:<sup>2</sup>



"It was about the first of June, 1825, when Father and Mother arrived at their new home, the village of Stillwater, probably by the usual conveyances of the time, the quiet sloop up the Hudson to Troy and from thence by stage. Of the grand scenery of that lordly river—the Palisades, the Catskills, and the valley landscape on those early summer days—we need not be told. Nature remains the same throughout the years.\* We may feel assured of the cordial welcome the Church gave to the young bride and groom."

John soon made a place for himself in the community as a stimulating preacher and well-loved pastor. He also conducted many services in the outlying farming sections, especially at the "old red school house." Both John and his father did much to organize churches in the new settlements, for they firmly believed that Christian people needed to gather in regular worship.

Church discipline in those days was strict, and the rules of Sabbath observance were taken seriously. At a meeting of the Session of his church, which he always attended as Moderator,

"Mr. Blatchford reported that he had visited Patty Depew, that she acknowledged that the reports were not without foundation, that she had broken the Sabbath by riding for pleasure and had attended a ball. After a full consideration of the case, the Session deemed it prudent to advise her to abstain from the Communion."<sup>2</sup>

John and his father were very close. For many years Dr. Blatchford attended the annual meetings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, of which he had been Moderator. He and John went together to the 1827 meetings in Philadelphia which made a deep impression on both men. It was their last such trip, for Dr. Blatchford died at Lansingburgh in March 1828. It must have meant much to the entire family to have John and Frances so near. The Stillwater parsonage beside the Hudson was their home for nearly two more years.

\* The editor and his wife found this true on a beautiful autumn day when they visited Stillwater and were cordially received by the present pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Rev. William G. Doxsey, and Mr. and Mrs. Oscar W. Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett, for many years president and treasurer of the Trustees, is the grandson of the Elder Bartlett mentioned in E. W. Blatchford's *Autobiography*.

## 1830-36 BRIDGEPORT

CURRENT EVENTS: One of first United States steam trains, Albany-Schenectady, 1831; William Lloyd Garrison, abolitionist editor, wrote (1831): "I am in earnest. I will not equivocate; I will not excuse; I will not retreat a single inch; and I will be heard!"

The story of the American Protestant movement helps to explain how it happened that Mr. Blatchford was called to the very same Bridgeport church which his father left 24 years before. The third decade of the 19th century, following "The Second Awakening," was a period of widespread revolt against the somewhat rigid Calvinistic doctrines then prevailing. In Massachusetts this religious rebellion took the form of the Unitarian movement. The issue which caused many a church rift, often leading to actual separation, was between the traditional theology and a more liberal interpretation of the great truths that are adaptable to any age.<sup>8</sup>

In January 1829 the Bridgeport congregation was without a pastor. The more liberal members placed Mr. Blatchford in nomination, knowing him to be a man of the "New School" and recalling his father's consecrated ministry. Due to the vigorous opposition of the conservatives, the vote favoring his call was by such a narrow margin that he believed it wise to decline. A year later, the controversy having resulted in the withdrawal of the conservative members to establish the "Second Church," he accepted a renewed call from the "First Church."<sup>\*</sup>

The six years of Mr. Blatchford's Bridgeport ministry did much to heal old wounds and develop the spiritual resources of the First Church. During his first year almost as many new members joined as had withdrawn. The young minister lent his full support to the progressive trends, especially the missionary and temperance movements. We are told that 225 prominent young men of the city enrolled in a temperance society.<sup>8</sup> His son gives colorful details of this period:<sup>2</sup>

\* Windows were installed in the First Church by Eliphalet W. Blatchford in memory of his father and grandfather. In 1916 the separated churches rejoined to form the present United Congregational Church. In the Parish Hall adjoining the new church at Park Avenue and State Street, completed in 1926, is a collection of framed photographs of former pastors including the Blatchfords.



"Father as pastor of the community and as preacher in the old church pulpit is the strong impression I now hold of those years at Bridgeport. He had decided interest in hymnology, though in later life he used to speak of himself as 'not knowing one tune from another.' He had favorite hymns, his preference being for Watts. . . . The greatest day of the year in those times was Thanksgiving Day, when Father read the Governor's Proclamation from the immense sheet of paper and a hymn was sung. He always read the hymn in full before it was sung; his clear, solemn voice gave great emphasis to the words.

"I remember one Thanksgiving Day, when the choir was very large, and the militia in full uniform, with flags, attended the crowded church, an imposing sight! I sat on the pulpit stairs. The same day Captain Thorp, a staunch friend of Father's, who had vessels running between Bridgeport and the West Indies, and his family dined with us. I thought he did discredit to Mother's good dinner by saying—'Well, I liked the sermon fully as much as my dinner'."

Eliphalet's writings illustrate the close relations and good times enjoyed by the family group:<sup>2</sup>

"Father was the center of this Bridgeport life during my boyhood. His geniality of manner was unfailing. I loved to be with him even when in his study, where he spent much time. A choice privilege was an occasional drive with him [one to New Haven is then recounted in detail]. Father's liking for horses was great; he was consulted, I recall, by a neighbor on the purchase of a span. . . . Father enjoyed outdoor life. He was fond of fishing, an agreeable companion being Cousin Samuel (later Honorable Samuel Blatchford, Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, 1882-1893), who used to visit us on his vacations from Columbia College. Between him and Father there was ever a warm friendship. What treats I had in accompanying them to the old Bridgeport Bridge where at certain stages of the tide the flounder fishing was fine."

The first break in the family circle came early in 1832 with

the death of "Brother Milford," a 4½-year-old boy of unusual promise. Childhood diseases took heavy toll in those years before preventive medicine, and only five of the twelve children were to reach maturity. This account will not relate the details of the children although their lives were naturally of major concern to their parents.

Frances was a great help to her husband in the church program; in fact, their son Eliphalet commented on his mother's "grace, beauty, and attractiveness as the parishioners used to gather about her at the close of the church services." But there was a threatening cloud in the sky—her health was not good. The birth of three more children and the running of a large family must have been contributing causes for the onset of "lung disease." In 1833 the doctors prescribed an ocean voyage the expenses of which Frances' father generously offered to pay. But she was too ill to be taken to New York to board the ship to Europe. Fortunately Frances' condition improved that summer and the immediate crisis passed.

At the bicentenary of the church in 1895, Dr. Charles Ray Palmer, the minister, described Mr. Blatchford as "a man of bright, ready mind, a genial spirit, of frank and pleasing manners. He spoke in a sympathetic and winning way and was a particularly effective preacher in revival seasons. The church parted with him with great regret, testifying strongly to his faithful, acceptable, and successful performance of his ministerial duties. On July 26th, 1836, he was dismissed at his own request, the health of his wife obliging him to change his residence."<sup>8</sup>

#### 1836-39. WESTWARD—JACKSONVILLE AND CHICAGO

CURRENT EVENTS: Financial Panic of 1837; Elijah Lovejoy, anti-slavery editor, murdered at Alton, Ill. (1837)

It must have been hard for the Blatchfords to leave their Bridgeport friends, but by 1836 Frances' illness made a change imperative. With their four children—two had died at Bridgeport—they journeyed by boat to Lansingburgh where John's mother and three aunts lived. Frances' father had moved the previous year from Ja-



maica to Troy to live with his sister Harriet and her husband, Dr. Thomas W. Blatchford. "Uncle Blatchford", as this highly respected physician was known in the family, agreed with a New York doctor that a sojourn in the Mississippi Valley would be beneficial for Frances and urged them to start at once. John's youngest brother, Edgumbe, also ill with serious lung trouble, would join them. They were to go by "steam train", canal and lake boats as far as possible to avoid the fatigue of stage travel over rough roads. As soon as arrangements were made at Lansingburgh for the children's schooling and boarding, the trio set out for Buffalo and Chicago, their destination being Illinois College, Jacksonville, where John's friend, Dr. Edward Beecher, was president. John describes the first part of the long journey:<sup>2</sup>

"We reached Utica in five hours from Schenectady. I need not tell you of the improvements in travelling, nor describe the rapidity of motion, nor the beauty of the train, nor the fright of horses. We left Utica for Syracuse in one of those beautiful packets which ply on the Erie and Hudson canal. You recollect that it is the middle section of this splendid work, the first part finished as it required less lockage. Thus with less money it might bring to the test and illustrate the advantage or disadvantage of this prodigious conception of the immortal Clinton. The result has shown that the "big ditch" will forever shed a halo around his memory. I well recollect his looks when this part of it was completed—he was on his way to Utica to enjoy the triumph of victory and worth. I was in college then but the impression can never be lost."

When the party reached Detroit, it was late in the season to sail on the Great Lakes. But after several days of searching, they found a small lumber schooner willing to take them, provided they supply their own food. Mr. Blatchford vividly described the perilous voyage:<sup>2</sup>

"Took passage for Chicago in the schooner Erie of 200 tons burthen, and entered Lake Huron with a fair but heavy wind. . . . It came on blowing a hurricane, and we running before it at the rate of 11 or 12 knots, all the time under bare poles. . . . In Mackinaw we saw the great Indian Council,

about 5000 Indians receiving pay for their lands previous to going west. . . . On Monday morning our foremast was carried away, sails and all, and we were left to the mercy of mountain waves. The wind was furious and the sea frightful . . . at 6 our rudder was torn away and at 8 the captain informed us that we must go upon a lee shore [Chicago, foot of Madison Street] and wished us to prepare for the worst. Our consternation was great; the waves dashing over us, at half mast, and every time the vessel struck bottom it seemed that we must go to pieces. From 8 to 11 we gave up all for lost, but every surf bore us nearer and nearer the shore; at 12 we settled, and every effort was made to save us, but all in vain, the breakers were so high that no relief could reach us. At 3 P.M. a boat came off and reached us in safety. . . . At 4 P.M. my dear Frances, Edgumbe and myself were lowered from the bows into a small boat, and rapidly drawn through the breakwaters to land. . . . Never did we so feel the privilege of pouring out our full heart in thanksgiving to Him who had snatched us from a watery grave."

Friends of the Blatchfords insisted that they stay in Chicago till they should recover enough strength to continue. At Jacksonville, a journey of over two hundred miles across the prairies, they were welcomed by the Edward Beechers, Julian Sturtevant, and other friends at Illinois College, which had been founded in 1829<sup>14</sup> by members of the "New Haven Band," a group of students at Yale Divinity School who had pledged their lives to home missionary work. The value of engaging in such work today would be more appreciated if we realized that a high proportion of our colleges and churches, in the East as well as the West, owe their existence to this movement.

Mrs. Blatchford soon began to improve, although the separation from the children was difficult. During that winter of 1836-37 Mr. Blatchford preached often and lectured on Intellectual and Moral Philosophy to the seniors.\* His intimate friend, Dr. Truman

\* Reliable sources state that he also served as president, a fact not verifiable by Dr. and Mrs. Fowler (Cf. Foreword) who have thoroughly checked the Trustees' Minutes with the full cooperation of the College officers. They noted that Mr. Blatchford was appointed in 1837 to the examination committee, and that the annual salary of a professor was \$1000.



M. Post, then on the Illinois College faculty and later the pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, said he never heard more powerful sermons than those of Mr. Blatchford that winter.

A pastor was needed by the little church in the outpost settlement of Chicago, organized by Reverend Jeremiah Porter in the carpenter shop of Fort Dearborn in 1833. The entire population had then consisted of the troops of the garrison with a handful of traders and settlers on the outside, possibly three hundred people in all. During the winter three years later, when he was at Illinois College, Mr. Blatchford preached several times in this "Church of the Frontier," and in the spring of 1837 he agreed to become its pastor as soon as he could make the arrangements. Those were the days of the early pioneers and the tiny community was not yet on the map. In fact, a Hartford minister, upon receiving an invitation to the Chicago church, inquired "Where is this place Chick-a-go?" Learning that it was in a swamp back of Lake Michigan, he thought it best to decline. One can easily understand that "conservative Easterners, in their comfortable homes, little realized in 1837 the possibilities in store for the fertile lands of the Mississippi basin."<sup>2</sup>

Leaving Frances with the friends at Illinois College, John returned East for the children. They were thrilled by the adventures on the journey westward via the Great Lakes, with interesting stops at Mackinac and Milwaukee. On arriving at their home, a small cottage on the north branch of the Chicago River, Eliphalet recalls:

"In a window pane of the little parlor to the left of the hall was a small hole made two years before by a bullet from the rifle of an Indian whose tribe was encamped on the opposite bank of the river. It was fired [probably by a Pottawatomie,]<sup>1</sup> while the wife of the Fort Dearborn commandant was sewing one evening by lamp light. Her narrow escape greatly impressed us. . . . The open prairie extended as far as the eye could reach, and in the fall and spring the nightly horizon was lighted up with prairie fires, sometimes coming, as it was thought, dangerously near the western limits of the city."<sup>2</sup>

On July 1, 1837, Mr. Blatchford became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, later known as "the Mother of Protestantism

in Chicago and the Middle West." As the first Presbyterian clergyman to be regularly installed in Chicago, his work in those early days,<sup>12</sup>

"was essentially that of laying the foundations for the future civic and religious life of this great city and in moulding into some proper form the various elements that came pouring in. His practical preaching, combined with faithful pastoral work, resulted in a revival in the winter of 1838-39. . . . Dr. Blatchford's winning personality and genial nature, his generous hospitality, and sense of humor, combined with strong social instincts, made him a delightful companion and cemented friendships among both young and old."

And in 1906 at the service of unveiling the tablet in memory of the Blatchfords, the pastor, Dr. John Archibald Morison, said:<sup>11</sup>

"With gifts and powers such as few possess, and an all-ruling love presiding over his unusual abilities, it is not surprising that the church should have flourished. For two months [the revival of 1838-39] with his nearest ministerial brother ninety miles distant, he conducted special services, preaching almost daily and twice on Sunday. Many who for long years thereafter were foremost in all good work in our city, dated the consecration of their lives from that memorable winter.

"This work proved too much for his physical strength. An attack of brain fever prostrated him, and it was eight months before he could even occasionally resume pulpit work. Nor did he ever again fully regain his wonted vigor and endurance. At his own request he was released from the pastorate of this church, August 18, 1839."

This unhappy result was not surprising when we consider that Mr. Blatchford also worked among the sailors and helped to organize new churches and a school for boys. It was fortunate for his family and associates that "much valuable work, in response to his earnest nature, was he able to accomplish in after years, in spite of weakness and suffering. . . . The termination of the two years in Chicago brought out evidence of warm affection which I well remember, not only from the church, but from many friends with whom Father and Mother had formed strong attachments."<sup>2</sup>



## 1839-47. WHEELING—MARION COLLEGE—WEST ELY

CURRENT EVENTS: Oregon Trail opened, 1841; Morse's first telegram—"What Hath God Wrought!" (1844); Mexican War, 1846-47

Just as Frances' health had been the main reason for going West in 1836, so it was Mr. Blatchford's breakdown which caused the family to return East in the summer of 1839. The six Blatchfords were given a hearty welcome by their relatives in Lansingburgh and Troy. In fact, their return sparked an "old-home-week" visit from as many of Mr. Blatchford's brothers as lived near enough to come. Eliphalet wrote:<sup>2</sup>

"It was quite a gala occasion in the old Lansingburgh home. The Uncles and indeed Grandmother and the Aunts were in most cheerful mood. . . . As a reminder of younger days the brothers took a swim in the old Hudson. I remember when they returned and Uncle Milford came up to Grandmother saying, 'Well, Mother, the river rose a foot when John jumped in!' referring to a tendency to corpulency in Father."

As the summer days turned to autumn Mr. Blatchford gradually improved and was able to preach occasionally in Troy and vicinity. Probably his best medicine was an appealing invitation to teach theology at Marion College in northern Missouri. Several friends, including Dr. Henry Stiles Ely and other prominent clergymen, realized the need of theological courses in that fast-growing state and urged him to accept. Another compelling reason for doing so was the fact that the western climate seemed to agree with Frances. It was decided that only she and their daughter Martha would go with Mr. Blatchford, the other children continuing their schooling in Lansingburgh.

So these three started west again in mid-November, intending to spend winter in Cincinnati. But when they reached Wheeling severe weather had already set in and the Ohio River, their means of travel, was frozen over. They were glad to accept the hospitality of old friends, and on the first of January their ninth child, Alexander, was born. That winter in Wheeling John preach-

ed several times and was urged to remain and organize a second church, an undertaking which his promise to Marion College prevented. With the coming of spring the quartet proceeded by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to Hannibal, Missouri, and thence to a friend's home on "West Ely Prairie," about twenty miles from Marion College. There Frances, Martha and "Sandy" stayed while Mr. Blatchford returned East for the three others.

At Marion College Mr. Blatchford taught theology and at the start of his second year became president upon Dr. Hiram P. Goodrich's resignation. In various ways life here differed from Bridgeport and Chicago, as shown by Eliphalet's description:<sup>2</sup>

"The open prairies of northern Missouri reminded me of those about early Chicago, but more extensive and with far more scattered settlements. Missouri was a slave state, and was principally settled by emigrants from Kentucky, a few families taking social precedence by claiming 'Old Virginia' as their old home. They were farmers, the crops, few in variety, being corn, wheat, oats and hemp, with a few sheep and cattle, and more hogs. The farm work was mainly done by Negroes with very primitive implements.

"Although Father's sympathies were with the New School branch of the Presbyterian Church, he drew to him the clergymen of northern Missouri, not limited to the Presbyterian denomination. He often preached at churches in the area and his sermons were always recognized as able, most acceptable and of deep spiritual power. He took an active part in the controversy then agitating the Presbyterian churches throughout the Mississippi Valley. He and several close friends organized the 'Synod of Missouri' and issued its 'Declaration of Sentiments' and other stirring documents."

Marion College conferred upon Mr. Blatchford an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1841. During his final year as president, 1842-43, he continued to instruct the students of theology and to encourage home missions, experiences which convinced him of the need for starting a theological seminary and gave him the name of "Pioneer of New School Presbyterianism in Missouri." Interest in religion was increasing and he was a leader at the pop-



ular camp meetings<sup>8</sup> which were a prominent feature of frontier life, serving the same evangelical purpose as the conferences to which people were accustomed in their former communities. Large numbers came from some distance to hear the preachers, bringing their bedding and provisions to camp on the grounds for several days.

When Dr. Blatchford first went to Marion College, he was unaware that a mortgage on the property was held by prominent Freemasons of St. Louis. When they foreclosed, with the worthy purpose of securing a college in the state, they invited him to continue as head, an offer he declined because "the regulations and principles in the scheme were in opposition, in his judgment, to a distinctively Christian education."<sup>9</sup> With this decision came the question: What next?

Dr. Blatchford bought a large, well-located farm about 20 miles from Marion College, to which the family moved in May 1843. It was near West Ely, ten miles west of the Mississippi River town of Hannibal, later made famous by Mark Twain, and six miles south of Palmyra, the site of a Civil War massacre. This property, which included a good-sized brick house, was named "Oakland Green" from the oak grove in the center of its prairie.<sup>4</sup> It was hoped that the farm life would benefit Dr. Blatchford's health and that the surrounding region would offer as much opportunity for church work as he could undertake, a hope amply fulfilled by his service to the Palmyra Presbyterian Church and others.<sup>10</sup>

The farm proved quite a responsibility, though yielding very practical products. Four men, including two Negroes owned by a slave-holder, were hired to care for the poultry, orchard, vegetable gardens, sheep and other livestock, and the main crops of wheat and oats. The children enjoyed these four years on the farm, and Eliphalet writes:<sup>2</sup>

"There was much in the life at Oakland Green that was congenial to Father. By correspondence and frequent invitations to visit them, he kept in touch with pastors and churches

\* Marion College as such then ceased operating. With real effort Dr. and Mrs. Fowler recently succeeded in locating the "Upper College" site on the B. B. Buchanan farm near Philadelphia. Mr. Buchanan, now 82, used woodwork from the original "President's Mansion" in building his house about 1920.

in northern Missouri, and the Oakland Green home was recognized by many as a center of Christian hospitality. Father's perfectly natural and winning manner, and Mother's refined and cordial welcome made friends with the many who visited us."

However, the same paragraph reports that "there were also some evidences of failure in Father's health that gave us some concern. There was one attack Father had that seemed somewhat like his illness in Chicago seven or eight years previous."

Another interest of Dr. Blatchford at that time was the State Colonization Society, a project backed by the Presbyterian Church "to colonize in Liberia, with their own consent, the free people of color of the United States."<sup>2</sup> From this activity we may assume that he felt much sympathy for the slaves and wished to help them in a definite way. Undoubtedly this feeling, together with his uncertain health, were factors in deciding to move from the slave state of Missouri to Quincy, Illinois, a change which offered promise of better schools, more attractive social life, and an end to the farming responsibilities.

#### 1847-55. QUINCY

CURRENT EVENTS: California Gold Rush, (1849); Henry Clay's Compromise of 1850; *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, (1852); Dred Scott decision, 1857

In the summer of 1847 a comfortable home, "Hazeldean", was bought in the suburbs of Quincy, a growing city on the Illinois bank of the Mississippi a few miles above Hannibal.<sup>4</sup> The sale by the government of lands in this area to soldiers and their subsequent resale to Eastern men attracted to Quincy many enterprising men of character in business and professional life. The standard of its bar "long stood unrivaled in our State," according to Abraham Lincoln who was practising law in Springfield.

Although Dr. Blatchford's rather frail health prevented his taking a church, he was active in a variety of interests. The Lyceum



movement of adult education by lecture and discussion was spreading rapidly, and one winter he lectured before the Quincy Lyceum on "The Early Discovery of America by the Northmen." He continued to preach occasionally, but each time he was exhausted for some days afterwards.

Dr. Blatchford's dominant interest during his last years was the establishing of a Presbyterian seminary, now the McCormick Theological Seminary of Chicago. From personal experience he knew the great need for such an institution. Of this work, one of his close associates, Rev. Dr. S. G. Spees, wrote:<sup>2</sup>

"From the first organization of the Northwestern Theological Seminary, he was by unanimous voice the presiding officer of its Board of Directors. On the completion of our plans and the realization of our hopes no heart was more fully set than his. At great personal inconvenience he was always present at the deliberations of its officers, and often was it with him a subject of fervent prayer that he might live to witness the consummation of an enterprise to which he had consecrated the remainder of his days."

A trip to England was planned for 1855 with the idea that an ocean voyage and a visit to Dr. Blatchford's parents' homeland would benefit him, but soon after preaching in St. Louis in January he was taken ill with "malignant pustule." The two final months were ones of great suffering which, Dr. Spees wrote, "he bore without a murmur. He carried with him the same cheerfulness, the same unwavering faith in Christ which had characterized the whole tenor of his life."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Blatchford died at the home of his daughter Martha, Mrs. Morris Collins, in St. Louis on April 8, 1855, in his fifty-sixth year. In addition to his devoted wife, Frances, and their daughter Martha, he left their youngest daughter Alice, and three sons, Eliphalet Wickes, John Samuel and Nathaniel Hopkins. Frances lived in Chicago till her seventieth year, residing first with her son Eliphalet, and then with her daughter Alice next door to Eliphalet's LaSalle Avenue home.

The funeral service on the 12th of April at the Quincy Presbyterian Church was conducted by Dr. Post, who paid a glowing

tribute to the achievements and character of his close friend. In part he said:<sup>13</sup> "His works left an impression on the early history of the West. . . . At least one thousand souls had received their first effective religious impressions, or had been brought to Christ, through his ministry. . . . Those who knew him best loved him most."

A monument marks the place of Dr. Blatchford's burial in Woodland Cemetery, Quincy, and bears the names of Frances and their twelve children some of whom were interred elsewhere. On another stone, beside that of his parents in Oakwood Cemetery, Troy, is John's name and that of his oldest brother, Reverend Henry Blatchford.

In 1906 the three sons presented to the First Presbyterian Church, Chicago, the bronze tablet\* reproduced on the inside back cover. But Dr. Blatchford's most fitting memorials, rather than monuments of marble and bronze, are the churches and seminary he organized and served, for these are living institutions which encourage the qualities described by Dr. Morison at the dedication of the tablet:<sup>11</sup>

"When future historians will enumerate the names of the great souls of God's church, the name of John Blatchford will be accorded notable mention among those who, by self-surrender and undaunted courage, by hatred of falsehood and contempt of luxury, by fidelity to Christ and enthusiasm for humanity, served their generation, inspired their successors, and wrought righteousness in the world."

\* This tablet is now in the South Narthex of the Church's beautiful edifice at 64th Street and Kimbark Avenue, dedicated in 1928.



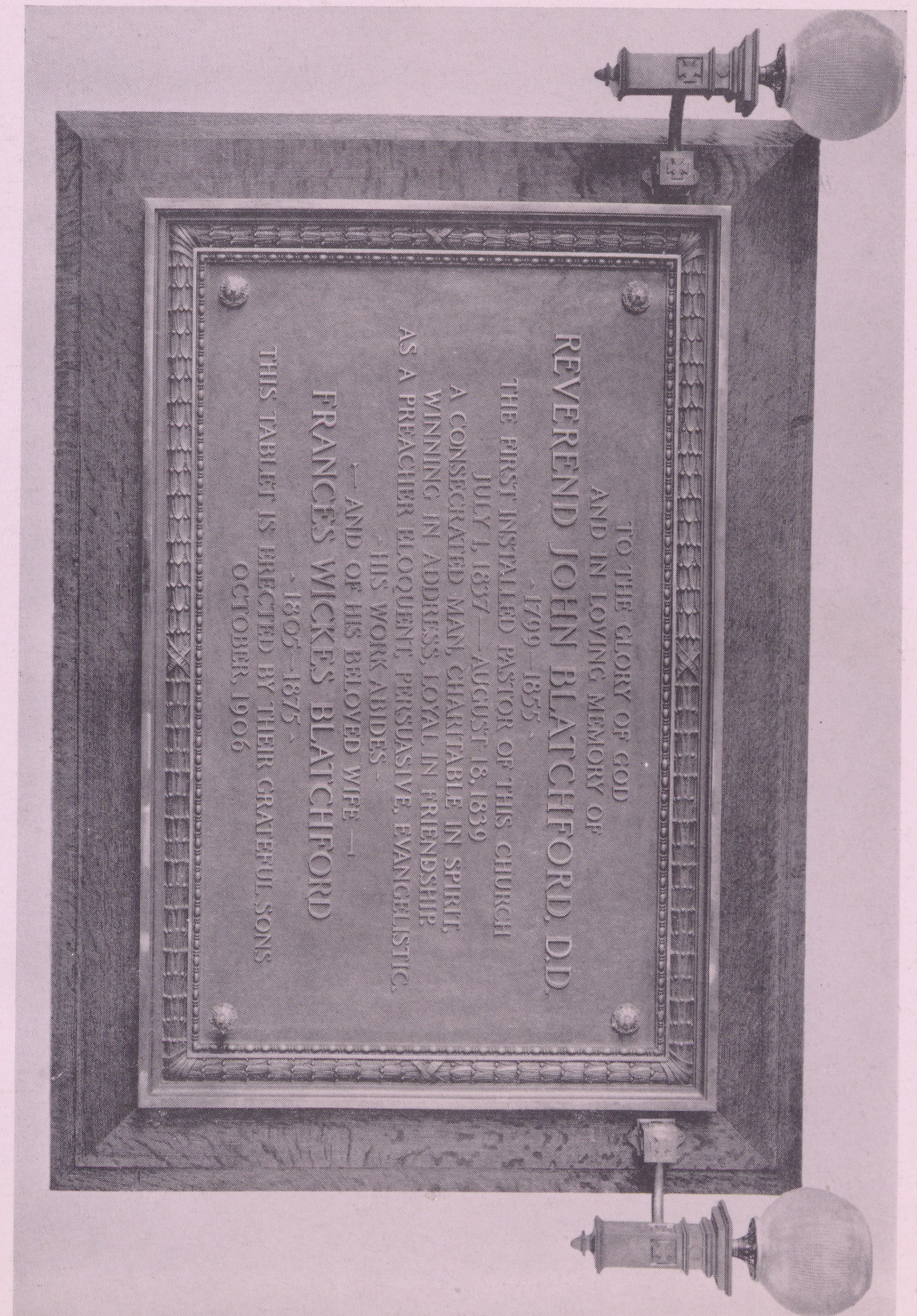
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\* \* \*

It is indeed a desirable thing to be well descended, but the glory belongs to our ancestors.

—PLUTARCH





John Blatchford

1820  
A73



John Blatchford 1820  
F.B.